

A PASTORAL LETTER FROM BISHOP WILLIAM NOLAN



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My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Every year we begin the new year by praying for justice and for peace. And each year it seems that justice and peace are beyond our grasp, yet ever more necessary than the year before. As we look around us, we see a world where justice and peace are an elusive dream for so many but not a reality.

Looking at the problems we face today, it is clear that many of these problems have as their root cause human weakness, human failing, and human sinfulness.

Much of the environmental crisis that confronts us just now is caused by our misuse of the world's resources, our pollution of the air and the seas, and our exploitation of the earth without a concern for the consequences.

And in so many countries we see the suffering caused by warfare and violence. Is it not strange that we human beings spend over 1.9 trillion dollars every year in global military spending? So much money spent defending ourselves from our fellow human beings! What does that say about the state of our humanity?

We need to recognise that the core of the problem lies within ourselves, within the human heart.

Among the consequences is that we live in a world where the number of forcibly displaced persons is more than it has ever been. 82.4 million people worldwide have had to leave their homes and move elsewhere, often to other countries, as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or climate change. Hardly surprising that some of these people try to reach our shores. Hardly surprising that those fleeing oppression or poverty take the risk of travelling in flimsy boats across the Channel longing to get here, to what they hope is the Promised Land.

We pray every year for peace and for justice. We need to pray fervently not just today but every day, so that the message of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will touch human hearts; so that we will recognise the dignity of our fellow human beings, particularly those who are strangers to us, particularly those who are poor, particularly those who call out to us for help.

May our prayer go hand in hand with our actions so that justice and peace may no longer be just a dream but become a reality in our world, in our lives and in the lives of our fellow human beings.

Wishing you every blessing in the year ahead,

+William Nolan Bishop of Galloway
President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland Justice and Peace Commission